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SUBJECT: ATTA RAISES SPECTER OF INSECURITY IN NORTH

¶1. (U) Summary: In his remarks at an International Peace Day event, Balkh Governor Atta Mohammed Noor predicted greater insecurity in the northern provinces within a year's time if the north does not receive its share of development projects and if there continues to be what he deems a lack of coordination between coalition forces and Afghan authorities resulting in civilian deaths. Atta also criticized attempts by the international community (IC) to pressure the GIROA to name major Afghan drug traffickers, and challenged the IC to clean up its own drug trafficking problems first. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Atta cited three factors contributing to the lack of peace in Afghanistan: Pakistani interference, drug trafficking, and civilian casualties caused by the failure of ISAF to coordinate operations with Afghan authorities. He demurred on commenting more on Pakistan out of concern that it might run contrary to GIROA policy, but was energized over the issue of drug trafficking, calling it a "black business" that some are using to exacerbate tensions and violence in the country. Atta quickly deflected the argument that the GIROA hasn't come forward with names of key drug traffickers as demanded by the IC, asking why the West isn't doing more to stop narcotics trafficking in their own countries. (Note: Atta was referring to the "list" of drug traffickers that former Interior Minister Jalali claimed to have. Some believe that Atta himself might be one of the drug traffickers named in that list. )

¶3. (U) Citing Balkh's successful poppy eradication campaign, Atta chided the IC for its "empty promises" of implementing alternative livelihood schemes, reminding the audience that the people of Balkh have not received any development projects in return for their economic sacrifices. He rhetorically asked the audience of businessmen, government officials and young people how a province like Helmand with a huge poppy problem could reap \$400 million in development projects and a poppy-free province like Balkh receives less than \$4 million in projects.

¶4. (U) The lack of operational coordination by coalition forces amounts to no less than a violation of the Afghan constitution, Atta charged, adding that he was glad PRT and ISAF representatives were in the audience to hear him say this. He warned that mounting civilian casualties which resulted from operations conducted on the basis of bad information are a "ticking time bomb" that could drive Afghans away from ISAF. Atta said he stressed to President Karzai the need for a joint information unit comprised of ISAF, ANA, ANP, and NDS to collect and analyze intelligence.

15. (SBU) Atta's sobering assessment of the prospects for greater insecurity in the north reflects his frustration with the development disparity between north and south. Though it is not the first time he has made such comments publicly, Atta delivered the message more forcefully this time, speaking without notes for almost 20 minutes before reading prepared remarks. It is not just Atta saying this: we have heard this message from local religious leaders, district officials, and elders. Atta acknowledged to Poloff at the PRT's Iftaar dinner that Balkh residents blame not just Karzai for the lack of development results - they blame him too. Heading into an election year, Atta knows that delivering results is important to maintaining his influence in the north regardless of what happens to Karzai. Atta's message is a clear reminder that while the north is the most permissive environment in the country for development, it is a long way from being called a sustained success story by any standard.

WOOD